

How to Improve the Safety of Packing Stations

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If someone told you that workplace injuries and illnesses cost U.S. companies over \$1 billion per year would that number surprise you? How about if you learned from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) that the actual number is close to \$1 billion per week? That would surely get your attention! And those are just the direct workers' compensation costs. On top of that, there are expenses associated with accident investigations and safety issue mitigation, hiring and training replacement workers, lost productivity, and more. If your company packs and ships products, your packing stations can be a hotspot for workplace injuries. Thankfully, there are steps that can help keep your organization from contributing to that \$1 billion per week figure.

Packing Station Safety and Your Bottom Line

In addition to the financial impacts, allowing your shipping team to work in unsafe packing stations can have a negative impact on your bottom line in other ways. For example, employees who have to take extra care to not get injured because they work in poor conditions are likely less productive. They are also more inclined to leave your company to find an employer that is more concerned with their well-being. Plus, as word gets around about people being injured and/or quitting, you will probably find that it becomes harder to hire good people. All of these factors can increase your operational costs and take a bite out of your profits.

7 Proven Steps for Improving Packing Station Safety

Here are some things you can do to make your packing station safer and your shipping team happier and more productive:

1. Use water-activated tape (WAT) and water-activated tape dispensers to reduce the risk of repetitive motion injuries. Not only can excessive use of a handheld tape gun cause injury, but trying to get the proper angle for applying tape from a tape gun can put workers in awkward and sometimes dangerous positions.
2. Provide your team with UL-listed water-activated tape dispensers. While using WAT can make your team more productive, a poorly designed and manufactured water-activated tape dispenser can put them at risk for injury.
3. Have appropriate safety equipment available. Hard hats, back support belts, gloves, goggles, and other protective gear should be readily available in or near your packing station.
4. Document and enforce rules on how much weight workers can lift. Back, neck, and shoulder injuries are common in environments where workers attempt to lift or move heavy cartons.
5. Train staff on how to safely handle potentially harmful items. Packing items like glassware, firearms, and hazardous materials exposes employees to greater risk. Be sure they understand best practices for preparing dangerous items for shipment.
6. Develop, test, and document safe packing procedures. This includes laying out your packing stations in a safe configuration and integrating them with your material handling system. Be sure that all your processes are in writing and easy for team members to find and follow.
7. Perform regular safety trainings. In order for employees to stick to your safe packing procedures, you need to provide thorough initial training for new employees and regular refreshers for all employees.

The Last Word on Packing Station Safety

The final reason that it is critical to ensure that your packing stations are safe is that nobody wants to see a coworker get injured. Whether they suffer a minor laceration or a major, life/limb-threatening trauma, it is especially unfortunate if it is an injury that could have been prevented by a proactive approach to workplace safety.

If you have questions about our water-activated tape, water-activated tape dispensers, and other products that contribute to safer, more productive packing stations, please contact us at your convenience.